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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#) [PHUM](#)
SUBJECT: FUR MAQDUM REASSURES ABOUT UNAMID AND HINTS AT TRIBAL
TALKS

REF: A. KHARTOUM 1989
[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 1968
[1](#)C. KHARTOUM 01978

[1](#)1. (SBU) In a December 12 meeting, the Maqdam (traditional "viceroy") of the Fur in Nyala, Ahmed Rajal, discussed with FieldOff the latest sentiment among the South Darfur Fur community with regard to deployment of the United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). The Maqdam inquired about the December 11 visit by the Charg to Kalma IDP camp and his conversations there with the sheikhs, which included discussions about UNAMID force composition (Ref A).

[1](#)2. (SBU) FieldOff expressed concern that in their conversation with the CDA, the sheikhs, not unlike the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the rebel movements, had seemed to be picking and choosing their preferred UNAMID nationalities. FieldOff warned that to do so would ultimately prove self-defeating, as seen in the controversy surrounding the Chinese engineering unit, which, due to threats by rebel movements and hostility from local communities (including the Fur), was unable/unwilling to leave its camp in Nyala. These engineers, FieldOff reminded, were essential for paving the way for larger UNAMID deployments. Therefore, to intimidate the engineers was to effectively put on hold subsequent UNAMID arrivals, which in turn would delay the provision of security that people on the ground had been so eagerly anticipating.

[1](#)3. (SBU) In a surprising response, the Maqdam declared that "We don't care if UNAMID is Afro-Asian or any other combination." He said that the Darfur security situation was deteriorating rapidly enough to scare people on the ground into cutting their losses and supporting UNAMID. He said he would inform the sheikhs in Kalma to "take what they can get" with UNAMID force composition so as not to jeopardize overall deployment of the operation.

[1](#)4. (SBU) The Maqdam also discussed the recent unsubstantiated trend in Arab-African tribal "reconciliation" across Darfur in the run-up to UNAMID deployment and resumed peace negotiations. He mentioned that on the evening of December 11, leaders of the Beni Halba tribe (an Arab tribe of Southern Darfur) had paid him a visit to discuss reviving a written agreement formalizing cooperation between that tribe and the Fur, an agreement that had been made three years earlier but fell apart in the outbreak of Darfur violence at that time. When asked about the Beni Halba's sincerity in honoring this agreement, the Maqdam replied that the Beni Halba representatives were currently "repenting" for crimes they had committed against the Fur in the past and that the Fur would not be served well to "marginalize" that tribe at this point.

[1](#)5. (SBU) COMMENT. While cooperation between some Arab militias and African rebel groups is on the rise (Refs B and C), it is difficult to get a straight answer from players on the ground about reconciliation between African and Arab tribes writ large, given the

sensitivities surrounding this type of rapprochement. However, the "written agreement" referred to by the Maqdam is consistent with rumors of other similar such arrangements reportedly concluded at much higher levels between other tribes throughout Darfur. It is still unclear whether these types of arrangements will evolve into something more tangible this time around than the paper agreements they represented when they were previously "formalized" three years ago before the outset of the Darfur conflict.

¶6. (SBU) Tripoli minimize considered.

FERNANDEZ